

GETTING BUSINESSES INVOLVED

As you are aware, businesses generate over one half of the garbage produced in California. If you are going to meet the mandated diversion goals, businesses need to do their part to implement waste reduction programs. You may need to educate the businesses in your community about the many ways that waste reduction is good for their bottom line. Here are some of the methods other local jurisdictions have used to get businesses involved.

GET A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Look at the overall conditions of your community; evaluate the barriers, look for solutions, and take advantage of the strengths that your community provides. For instance, maybe your community is a resort town, consisting of an intermittent population, with a fluctuating solid waste stream. Or, businesses in your community may already have a strong recycling background. Use this information as a foundation to drawing up a plan of action.

A number of communities have developed specific plans to reach the business sector, including the cities of Los Angeles and San Jose and the Alameda County Solid Waste Management Authority.

TARGET SIGNIFICANT WASTE GENERATORS

Target the large generators or largest components of the waste stream to maximize efficiency through technical assistance, educational and promotional efforts, and minimize personnel and financial costs. Large generators gain because they have the greatest opportunity for waste reduction and can realize a net savings in the cost of doing business.

When the Alameda County Solid Waste Management Authority (ACSWMA) developed its business waste reduction program, ACSWMA considered not only the largest solid waste generators but also those which generate materials for which there is a current recycling market. ACSWMA also looked at the number and distribution of certain business types and the number of employees in those companies.

CREATE PARTNERSHIPS

Tap into existing business communication networks, trade groups, associations, and task forces. These groups can help you determine the best approach to reach their members. Approaches that have worked for some cities include meeting with industry groups during their regularly scheduled meetings and establishing work groups specific to solid waste reduction. Don't forget to get input from key industry members.

The South Bay Business Environmental Coalition (SBBEC), located in the Los Angeles region, is a proactive business group that is actively helping local governments come into compliance with environmental regulations including the state mandated waste diversion requirements. They hold roundtables to discuss topics such as barriers and solutions to meeting AB 939 goals.

ENCOURAGE WASTE ASSESSMENTS

Encourage targeted businesses to conduct waste assessments. Waste assessments help businesses to understand the types and amounts of waste they produce and help them analyze options for reducing it. If funding permits provide on-site waste assessments and assistance.

The Cities of Napa, San Diego, Palo Alto, and Alameda County help their businesses conduct waste assessments. The San Francisco Recycling Program assists offices in waste assessments upon request.

PROVIDE INFORMATION AND SELF-HELP MATERIALS

Use this kit or develop your own materials to provide businesses interested in setting up waste reduction programs. Supplement these tools with local information such as a directory of local contacts and services. Consider holding workshops for specific business sectors (e.g., offices, hotels, restaurants).

Sacramento County developed a waste reduction guide for businesses, compiled a guide of equipment dealers and local recyclers, and held workshops for offices and restaurants. San Francisco has Hotel and Restaurant recycling guides and offers hands-on assistance to offices interested in waste reduction.

The California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) has a variety of materials and programs available to assist communities, businesses, and individuals in all aspects of solid waste management. For more information, call the CIWMB Recycling Hotline at (800)553-2962.

RECOGNIZE COMPANIES THAT SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE WASTE

Publicize the great strides active businesses have made in waste reduction. Recognizing those businesses in your community will encourage them to continue and expand their efforts and it may encourage others to follow. Publicizing these leaders doesn't have to be expensive or time consuming. It can simply entail sending out a press release or holding a press conference. Or, you can give out awards to businesses.

The CIWMB's Waste Reduction Awards Program (WRAP) recognizes California businesses for their environmentally sound waste management practices like waste prevention, recycling, buying recycled, and employee education. Businesses are judged on the basis of their own merit, not against other businesses. Successful applicants receive a certificate from the State, a camera-ready WRAP emblem for promotional purposes, and extensive local and statewide media coverage. The City of Napa has also implemented an awards program at the local level.

MONITOR PROGRESS & RECORD SUCCESSES

Once your program is up and running it is important to monitor not only the successes, but also the failures. Record the lessons learned, cost savings, and waste diverted. Share the information with your management, other businesses, and interested agencies (i.e. CIWMB). Check with businesses before you give any information out, as some information may be considered confidential. Ask if model businesses would be willing to provide tours to other businesses or assist others on a limited basis.

Most current local business waste reduction programs are fairly new, but tracking results will assist in the planning and implementation of new programs or the expansion of existing ones.

VOLUNTARY VS MANDATORY APPROACHES

Taking a proactive approach to get businesses involved decreases the need for a regulatory approach. However, since businesses generate over one-half of the solid waste in California, it is important to let businesses know that if voluntary approaches don't work, mandatory approaches may be necessary in the future.

FOR MORE HELP

- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle — It's Good Business — A Guide for California Businesses. This guide contains easy to use worksheets for conducting a waste assessment. Available from the CIWMB at (916)255-2296.
- Let businesses in your community know about the CIWMB Waste Reduction Awards Program (WRAP). For more information about WRAP contact CIWMB at (916)255-2296.
- The CIWMB Waste Prevention Info Exchange at (916)255-INFO has fact sheets, case studies, how-to guides, and outreach materials from other organizations and offers technical assistance on waste prevention.

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